

Love Legends: Dr. Wilson



Dr. Wilson smells the flowers and remembers falling in love. •Photo courtesy of Dustin Burleson

By JENNIFER ZHU

Do you believe in true love and a soulmate? What is your philosophy on love?

Yes, I believe in true love. I think that love isn't just infatuation: love is something that is built on a deep friendship and an ability to communicate with each other, to go through the thick and thin of life, knowing that you're going to have some bumpy roads and everything isn't going to be perfect. You have to look out a window and see the world pretty much the same just in the big world view, not the little things, and see the same big picture as in the same outlook on life [not necessarily same political and religious beliefs].

What was your most interesting date?

I think it's the night I met my husband! I can tell you where my husband was standing and my first impression of him. I remember, I don't remember for anybody else I dated. I had gone on the date because my roommate had fixed me up, and she was dating a friend of my husband, I mean, I don't go on blind dates! But she told me, "Okay we're going to study and then at 10 o'clock, we'll go have a beer." And later, my husband and I discovered that we both didn't like beer, that we both had just ordered one to be polite. This was the month after I graduated from college—I was back on campus to start my master's. This was all at Duke.

How did you meet your husband? First impressions?

You know it's kind of interesting because another friend of mine told me, "Ginger, I just met somebody who is perfect for you!" I told her to forget it—I don't go on blind dates. And it was Gerald [my husband]. She couldn't believe it when I told her who I was dating later—she said, "That was the guy I wanted to fix you up with!" Very soon, I realized we [Gerald and I] had a lot of common interests. I was a history major, he was a history major. He was very interested in politics, I was very interested in politics. We liked the same kind of architecture and furniture and basically, neither one of us really enjoyed just dating for dating. We really wanted to date somebody who was interesting, who sort of looked out of the window and saw the picture that I did, who was a possibility for marriage.

How did he win you over?

I think he has a beautiful speaking voice. Not only did I like his voice but I liked what he said. He had and has a very good sense of humor: he's an optimist. He sees the world in positive terms.

When did you know that he was the right one?

I think after the first summer, by September of that year, I knew that I really liked him in a way that was different from other guys.

How did he propose?

After the first year, it was sort of a given that we were going to

get married. He asked my parents' permission in December of the second year. We were holding hands, and I felt like he was killing my hand and my wrist was dying, he was so nervous.

How do you know it's the right person?

I don't know how you know; it's just a feeling. When you're dating somebody, you know them but you don't know them. In that way, love is always a chance, but we've been married for forty six years this June. Love has to be something that will stick. You have to go into marriage thinking that this is forever. That's something that people don't really do now, but you have to go into it really thinking that I'm going to find a person that I can spend the rest of my life with. You have to go in thinking this is for life.

What about changing yourself for the person you love?

There's always compromise with anybody, whether it's just a friend. You have to know that you're going to have to compromise, but if somebody wants you to change in major ways, then it's probably not the right person. You always want to improve yourself, and you need to give each other space, space to grow. When you grow with that space, there's also that mutual love that holds the two of you together while you're growing. You can't say I want my husband to be this, this, this. I think you have to know yourself well enough that when you meet somebody, he may look different or be different than what you pictured.

What about listing out characteristics and criteria you want that significant other to have? Is it good to have an idea of what you're looking for or is that making you too inflexible?

When they [characteristics/criteria] are broad, it's okay. You want somebody who is smart, and they don't need to be clown funny but they need to have a sense of humor because things will happen that if you can't laugh, you're going to be crying a lot in life.

Any advice on love for the readers, especially for us teenagers?

First of all, I think you need to know yourself, and know yourself well and what kind of things make you happy and what kind of things make you sad. And I think that if you know yourself well, then you can look at other people and see if they're going to complement you. And I think that love is the most important thing in the world, whether it is between husband/wife, siblings, parent and child, love between any two people or love between a person and an animal. It makes your life to know that other people care about you and you care about other people.

Don't ever get desperate and just take anyone just to say you have someone! If you know yourself and you feel good about yourself, I don't think you would do that.